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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBURGEOIS, DBENZE AND
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TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Iran, President Asad's
Speech to the Federation of Arab Lawyers, Lebanon, Iraq,
Palestinian Territories, France (1/20-22)

11. Summary: Syrian weekend newspapers focused on the visit to
Damascus by Iranian President Ahmadinejad and featured the joint
communiqué issued at the conclusion of the visit confirming
Iran's strong support of Syria to restore occupied territories to
the June 4, 1967, line.

Syria and Iran underlined the necessity of an Israeli pullout
from all occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan,
the Palestinian territories and the Lebanese land that is still
occupied.

Both sides underscored the rights of the Palestinian people to
liberate their lands, return home, and establish an independent
state with Jerusalem as its capital.

The two sides expressed relief over the high level of political
relations between the two and stressed their interest in
developing economic relations and making use of the available
potentials of Syria and Iran.

The two sides reiterated condemnation of the assassination of
former Lebanese Premier Rafik Hariri, stressing their concern
that the international investigation take its course on a
professional, legal and neutral basis without exploiting the
crime for political ends that aim to pressure Syria.

The two sides expressed concern over continuation of foreign
intervention in Lebanese and Syrian internal affairs, drawing
attention to the negative repercussions of such intervention on
stability and security in the region.

The two sides reiterated their support for the current political
process in the region, stressing the need to achieve security,
stability and national reconciliation among all the Iraqi people,
welcoming in this context all the efforts exerted by the United
Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Iraq's
neighboring states and the Arab Initiative for National
Reconciliation.

The two sides welcomed the Iraqi elections to form a national
assembly and an Iraqi government in which all the Iraqi factions
will take part, stressing readiness to extend all forms of
support for the new Iraqi government.

The two sides stressed the importance of implementing UN
resolutions, ridding the Middle East of WMD, and subjecting
Israeli nuclear installations to international surveillance.
Syria and Iran stressed the right of all countries, including
Iran, to peaceful use of technology and nuclear energy in line
with the NPT, without selectivity or double standards.
In a joint press conference, both leaders confirmed support of

stability in Lebanon and the need to back the resistance and to prevent interference in Lebanon's affairs.

President Asad expressed support of Iran's right to peaceful nuclear technology and welcomed dialogue on this subject between Iran and the concerned international parties.

On the issue of Iraq, both leaders stressed the need to boost the current political process in Iraq, to work for Iraq's stability, and to prevent interference in its internal affairs, and urged foreign forces to withdraw according to a fixed timetable.

In an address to the Federation of Arab Lawyers in Damascus on January 21, President Asad charged that what is happening between Syria and Lebanon is part of "a global plot against all Arabs, which has many facets."

Asad confirmed Syria's commitment to cooperate with UN investigators but not at the expense of its national sovereignty.

President Asad vowed to speed up reforms aimed at introducing more political freedom and a measure of democracy to Syria, but said he would resist foreign pressure for change.

"We are still at the beginning of a long road, but we will not let it be said that we have achieved nothing. Maybe the [pace] is slow ... but we are speeding as much as possible."

"We are undertaking several projects that will boost public participation and help enrich democratic life, whether it be linked to the parties law or to election and local government laws," Asad said.

12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad and President Ahmadinejad finalize talks by confirming deep political and economic relations. The final communique emphasizes the importance of eliminating Israeli occupation and warns against foreign intervention" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 1/21)

"President Asad and President Ahmadinejad discuss in an open meeting and a closed meeting the topics of Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon and bilateral relations. Asad: Agreement on stability in Iraq and Lebanon, rejection of internationalization, and restoration of Palestinian rights. President Ahmadinejad: Syria and Iran play a substantive role in the region" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/20)

"President Asad: Iran has the right to possess peaceful Lebanese emphasis on reconciliation and rejection of US Speech to the Federation of Arab Lawyers, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestinian Territories, France (1/20-22)

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Both sides underscored the rights of the Palestinian people to liberate their lands, return home, and establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital.

The two sides expressed relief over the high level of political relations between the two and stressed their interest in developing economic relations and making use of the available potentials of Syria and Iran.

The two sides reiterated condemnation of the assassination of former Lebanese Premier Rafik Hariri, stressing their concern that the international investigation take its course on a professional, legal and neutral basis without exploiting the crime for political ends that aim to pressure Syria.

The two sides expressed concern over continuation of foreign intervention in Lebanese and Syrian internal affairs, drawing attention to the negative repercussions of such intervention on

stability and security in the region.

The two sides reiterated their support for the current political process in the region, stressing the need to achieve security, stability and national reconciliation among all the Iraqi people, welcoming in this context all the efforts exerted by the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Iraq's neighboring states and the Arab Initiative for National Reconciliation.

The two sides welcomed the Iraqi elections to form a national assembly and an Iraqi government in which all the Iraqi factions will take part, stressing readiness to extend all forms of support for the new Iraqi government.

The two sides stressed the importance of implementing UN resolutions, ridding the Middle East of WMD, and subjecting Israeli nuclear installations to international surveillance. Syria and Iran stressed the right of all countries, including Iran, to peaceful use of technology and nuclear energy in line with the NPT, without selectivity or double standards. In a joint press conference, both leaders confirmed support of stability in Lebanon and the need to back the resistance and to prevent interference in Lebanon's affairs.

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Extraordinary Summit in Damascus"

An unsigned editorial in government-owned Al-Ba'th, said (1/20): "Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad's visit to Damascus and the discussions he held with President Asad have a special significance....

"The hostile attack to which the two countries in particular and the Middle East region in general are being subjected has extended to its maximum possible limits and is taking the fiercest and most vicious forms ever. The United States, its subordinates and allies have taken off their masks and breached all values and principles in their rabid endeavor to impose their Speech to the Federation of Arab Lawyers, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestinian Territories, France (1/20-22)

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hegemony upon the region...to redraw the Middle East map and reshape its states and existing regimes....

"The United States has employed different methods and pretexts in dealing with both countries. In Syria's case, it has employed false claims about Syria's failure to control its border with Iraq and has tried to implicate it in the Al-Hariri assassination. As for Iran, the United States has made claims about Iran's alleged endeavor to produce nuclear arms and support terrorism. Despite all that, the US aims have become clear to the public, that is, encircling Syria and Iran and leaving them with two options. The first is to give in and do whatever they are required to do, that is, surrender unconditionally and without limitation, as a preliminary step toward joining the so-called 'Greater Middle East' US plan. The second option is to face the application of the Iraqi model to Syria and Iran, that is, the imposition of siege, boycott and sanctions.

"Syria's response was similar to that of Iran, namely, emphasizing its determination, despite all that this option entails in the present regional and international reality, to withstand difficulties, sacrifice and detriment. The choice to resist has emerged from the fact that both countries have not violated any international law or human code, have not defied any of the principles that regulate international relations, and have not breached UN resolutions or its charter...."

"Who Interferes in Others' Affairs?"

Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, said Speech to the Federation of Arab Lawyers, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestinian Territories, France (1/20-22)

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(1/21): "The United States does not have any proof that Syria is interfering in Lebanese, Iraqi, or Palestinian affairs....

"If Syria, as they claim, interferes in the affairs of neighboring Arab countries, is the occupation of Iraq not interference in the affairs of another country? Isn't US Assistant Secretary of State David Welch's statement, that Hizbollah is a terrorist organization that must not be included in the government, interference in Lebanon's domestic affairs?

"The United States rejects Hizbollah's presence in the Lebanese government and rejects HAMAS' representation in the Palestinian government after the forthcoming elections. Is this the promised democracy that they want to impose on the Arabs by force?

"The United States is building its policy on lies.... The US Administration must acknowledge its mistakes before people's hatred of the American policies turns into hatred of the United States."

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"Superpowers Brandish Nuclear Deterrence"
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Hanan Hamad, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (1/21): "French President Chirac took the concept of nuclear deterrence to a new and more dangerous level when he threatened to use nuclear weapons against any country launching a terror attack on French territory or against its allies, or their interests....

"The US Administration has been studying the possibility of using nuclear weapons against adversaries, even in preemptive strikes.... Chirac's statements give Washington the green light to implement its new nuclear strategy...."
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